

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley

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Colorado Becomes First State to Limit Methane Emissions from Oil, Gas



Colorado has adopted tougher air pollution rules for the oil and gas industry—the first in the nation to cover methane, a potent greenhouse gas (GHG) linked to climate change. State air quality control commissioners voted 8-1 last month to pass the rules with the support of leading operators Anadarko Petroleum, Noble Energy, and Encana. By passing rules aimed at reducing toxic emissions from oil and gas facilities, Colorado officials are trying to allow an energy boom while also protecting health and the environment. “This is in the best interests of public health,” state health Director Larry Wolk said. “Methane and hydrocarbons being significant contributors to ground ozone—and climate change—anything we can do to control that is going to improve the health of our citizens—adults and kids. We have to look to the future.” The rules require companies to detect leaks and fix them, and to install devices that capture 95 percent of emissions—both volatile organic compounds and methane. “All Coloradans deserve a healthy economy and a healthy environment, and we’re working to ensure that Colorado continues to have both,” said Gov. John Hickenlooper. (*Denver Post*)

Research Giants Publish Global Warming Science Primer

The U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the U.K. Royal Society have released a joint report about which aspects of climate science are firmly established and which are still under investigation. The role of human emissions in driving warming is now settled science, the report says. It’s also clear that warmer oceans, rising sea levels, and dwindling Arctic sea ice are occurring, have accelerated as carbon emissions have risen, and will intensify as more emissions pour into the atmosphere. The report addresses doubts often raised by climate skeptics. Sunspots, volcanic activity, and natural variations in the climate system—each proposed as a possible natural cause of warming—have been shown by climate models to have little effect. Skeptics also point to the “pause” in warming, saying a slowdown in the rate of increase of world surface temperatures since 1998 shows that concern about climate change is overblown. But the report says that “a short-term slowdown in the warming of Earth’s surface does not invalidate our understanding of long-term changes in global temperature arising from human-induced changes in greenhouse gases.” There are some continued areas of uncertainty, such as the effect of cloud dynamics in counteracting warming, and research aimed at answering those unknowns continues around the world. (*E&E*)

Emerging Economies Lead Climate Action, Study Finds

Nations have passed almost 500 laws to tackle climate change, with emerging economies accounting for most of last year’s progress, says a study by the Global Legislators Organisation (GLOBE). Sixty-two of the 66 countries examined have passed or are working on “significant” climate or energy-related laws. Venezuela, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Canada lack “flagship” legislation, according to GLOBE, a non-partisan alliance of global lawmakers. For the second year running, GLOBE flagged China and Mexico among nations making the most progress. They were among 19 countries to have made “positive advances” last year, and eight other nations passed “flagship” legislation: Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kenya, Micronesia, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Switzerland. Twenty developed nations have passed 194 climate laws, while 46 poorer countries have 293 climate laws in place. The nations studied cover 88 percent of world emissions. (*Bloomberg*)

How Big Oil Gave Up On the Climate

In his new book, *Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming*, McKenzie Funk examines who is capitalizing on climate change. In 2008, Shell released two possible scenarios for a global response to climate change. Both were predicated on “three hard truths”: global energy demand is rising, the supply of conventional energy cannot keep up, and climate change is real and dangerous. One scenario, “Blueprints,” envisioned an increasingly urgent and systematic global effort to cut emissions and develop cleaner technologies. A second, “Scramble,” envisioned the world continuing to balk at real action, because curbing energy demand is too unpopular for politicians to undertake. In 2008, Shell said Blueprints would be better for the company and the world, and CEO Jeroen van der Veer called for a price on carbon emissions. But by 2012, a Shell executive said, “I will be one of those persons most cheering for an endless summer in Alaska.” The melting Arctic is already opening up new shipping lanes, and Shell has poured \$6 billion into Arctic oil drilling, which the company considers its “most attractive single opportunity for the future”, according to Shell CFO Simon Henry. (*Slate*) 